

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

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Hutongs Reborn

Beijing's famous hutongs have been assigned to property-management companies that will be responsible for cleaning up and maintaining the ancient alleys.

There will also be security guards and workers available to replace water taps, light bulbs and natural gas pipes. For now, the government is covering all the fees. **Page 2**

Iraq Releases Captured PKU Student

BY DIAO DIAO

Iraqi police arrested Liu Tuo, a Chinese man, earlier this month on charges of participation in the Islamic State, an international terrorist organization.

It took weeks of intervention by the Chinese Embassy in Iraq to confirm Liu was a 26-year-old student of archeology at Peking University. He was released on July 27 and will return to China next week.

Fars News Agency of Iraq was the first to reveal that Iraqi police had captured a Chinese man who may have been a member of IS on July 8. Peking University immediately responded and said the

man in the story was Liu Tuo, a student, and helped his family get in touch with Iraqi officials.

"We were supposed to meet in Turkey on July 16, but he was not able to make it," Liu's friend Yang Shuai told China News Service. "Liu contacted me every day to talk about strange things. He said he spent almost a whole day at a security check on July 7."

Yang said Liu told him that he wanted to see the Tower of Babel and a 9th century settlement located in IS-controlled territory.

Last year, Liu traveled to a number

of countries across Central Asia and the Near East. He spent 44 days crossing China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Armenia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

He wrote on his blog that he would not stop visiting these countries, which he called treasures of the ancient world, because of war.

Before going to Iraq, he told his friend that all the ancient treasures could be wiped out by the war, and that it would be a pity if he never had the chance to see such great places – even if it meant braving dangers. ■

CHINESE STOCK INDEXES

SSE (Shanghai)

Close	Change	YTD
3,705.77	▼ 83.40 (2.20%)	-0.56%

SZSE (Shenzhen)

Close	Change	YTD
12,395.92	▼ 427.15 (3.33%)	-0.82%

HSI (Hong Kong)

Close	Change	YTD
24,497.98	▼ 121.47 (0.49%)	+4.24%

Accurate to market close on July 30, 2015





Photo by nicpic.com

Shijia, Sheshi Hutongs Under New Management

BY DIAO DIAO

Beijing's hutongs are famous for their local culture and their long history. They are also famous for being a disorderly mess. But the old Shijia Hutong and Sheshi Hutong may be getting cleaned up now that they have signed a management agreement with Beiyu property company.

2015 marks the first time that all of the city's hutongs are signed to various property management companies. Such contracts ensure that essential services and cleaning trucks are available to the alleys.

Deng Bin, deputy director general

of the Chaoyang Sub-District Office, said the district has been searching for several years for a property company that would sort out the many disorderly alleys along the Dongsu Hutong preservation area.

Initial cleanup efforts include the deployment of 40 garbage trucks, two street cleaners, and 16 automatic stainless steel vehicles that will be used for garbage transport.

There are two trucks used for collecting and recycling big items and 16 small cars that patrol every 15 minutes to collect daily waste. Two

advertisement removal cars and two kitchen waste collectors work every day in the hutongs.

Cleaners come by to pick up other waste at 8 am and 6 pm each day. Each household is given a scorecard to record whether they throw out their garbage on time. The company said residents might receive small gifts based on their score.

Deng said future service could include gas tank replacement.

The property company has also assigned security guards to patrol between the hours of 6-10 pm. A resident surnamed Lian who lives in Shijia Hutong said he often heard people testing his locks before the security guards arrived.

Other services include replacing water taps, light bulbs and natural gas pipes.

All fees are covered by the government, which is developing its first guidebook on hutong management. ■

Hacking, Fraud Costs Netizens 80.5 Bln Yuan

BY SHU PENGQIAN

Personal information leaks, junk mail and fraud have cost China's netizens a combined 80.5 billion yuan since the start of 2015.

With 668 million netizens, that means the average Internet user lost 124 yuan due to scams. An unlucky 45 million netizens lost more than 1,000 yuan each, according to the 2015 Investigative Report on the Protection of Chinese Netizens' Rights and Interests by the Internet Society of China.

Internet security is a major issue in China, and the new report underscores the worrying state of security on the domestic Web.

"The majority of Chinese netizens have no awareness of the need to guard personal information when surfing the Internet. Chinese network operators do little to safeguard their users' information," Yin Libo, chief engineer at the Institute of Electronic Science and Technology, told the *The Beijing News*.

According to the above 2015 investigation, 78.2 percent of netizens' personal information, including name, educational degree, home address, identity number and workplace, can be found online.

Scammers can utilize this information to shop on websites, steal from employees, or defraud people of their money and property.

In the most common scam, the conman pretends to work for a bank, Internet company or TV station and notifies the user that he or she has won a prize. An estimated 76.3 percent of China's netizens have experienced this scam.

Although the domestic Web security situation is not optimistic, it may improve when the new Network Security Law is issued later this month, Yin said.

"The law clearly defines how website operators are responsible for protecting netizen's information and provides the punitive measures," Yin said. "That is a big step for China's Web security." ■



CFP Photos

Women Head Abroad to Freeze Eggs

BY WANG YAN

Chinese movie star Xu Jinglei recently announced on her microblog that she had frozen nine of her eggs two years ago at a hospital in Los Angeles.

The news became a hot topic this week, with many Chinese websites running the stories of women who have a similar wish. Egg preservation services are not widely available on the Chinese mainland, where they remain a social taboo.

A spokesperson for the Family Planning Commission told Xinhua News Agency that medical technicians are still researching the technology to freeze eggs. Although technically experimental, an increasing number of Chinese women are considering having their eggs frozen.

Li Rong, director of Reproductive Center at Peking University Third Hospital, said the hospital has received an



increasing number of requests from women who want to freeze their eggs. Li said the technology only entered China 10 years ago, and that it remains difficult to access.

"Chinese law prohibits unmarried women from undergoing assisted reproductive surgeries such as egg freezing. It also restricts married women who wish to pursue such surgery," said Kang Yuefan,

head of the reproductive center at Women's Hospital in Fujian province.

According to the law, married couples must have documented infertility problems before approved for such surgery. In 2013, Shanghai's health regulator agreed to allow female cancer patients to have their eggs frozen before treatment.

The restricted service did not stop women who want to preserve their ability to raise offspring. And like many other businesses in China, the market segment has headed abroad.

According to the *Shenghuo Daily*, most women choose the US, Thailand, Hong Kong or Macao for such surgery.

Thailand is the most popular destination because it is the cheapest. Freezing eggs in Thailand for three years costs 50,000 yuan while a similar service in the US costs 120,000 yuan. ■

Photo by tieba.baidu.com



Baboon Spiders Intercepted En Route to Pet Shops

BY DIAO DIAO

Agents of the Quarantine Bureau of Fuzhou, Fujian province intercepted a Polish parcel packed with 77 poisonous giant baboon spiders that were intended for sale as pets.

The African arachnids, each measuring about a centimeter, were stored in finder-shaped plastic tubes and were still alive after their journey.

An adult giant baboon spider can reach 19 centimeters in length after six to eight molts.

"This was the first time this species has ever been sighted in the province," the bureau said. "A growing number of people are becoming curious about keeping exotic species as pets."

Reporters at the *Fujian Daily* searched for the spider on several E-commerce websites and found numerous shops selling them as "pets." Single 1.5-centimeter spiders were priced 30 yuan each.

The bureau said the importation of new species from abroad is prohibited

without the appropriate paperwork. Many foreign species have no natural enemies in China and can destroy the country's ecological balance.

China has tightened its laws on the importation of live animals during the last several years. All trade in live animals is prohibited without the appropriate permission and quarantine certificates. The shipment of spiders was destroyed at the port of entry.

Spiders, pythons, lizards, frogs and hedgehogs are becoming increasingly popular exotic pets.

Feng Shao, the owner of a pet shop in Yunnan province, said domestic pet markets are trading in increasingly unusual animals.

"Some think that these animals look interesting. They are easy to keep and people want to observe to know more about their living habits. Others are just looking for something different to show off," Feng said.

Feng sells snakes, spiders and lizards. A small green snake costs 50 yuan and a yellow variant costs 300 yuan. The prices of black-eyed snakes and black-scaled snakes depend on their size. Pythons are available on demand and cost 3,000 yuan.

An African dwarf hedgehog costs 100 yuan.

Feng said the number of shops in the province that sell unusual exotic animals has more than doubled from four to ten over the last year. Most animals, while cheap, require expensive food, housing and maintenance.

In April, a college student in Fuzhou, Fujian province was found with nine ball pythons in his home. The snakes are considered national second-level protected wildlife.

The student was exposed by netizens and detained by local police for illegal acquisition and transport of precious and endangered animals. ■



Bad Driver Shreds Officer's Pants Over Ticket

A white Mercedes-Benz luxury car was sighted driving against traffic during rush hour in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. A local police officer stopped the car, took the driver's license and prepared to issue a ticket.

While he was completing the paperwork, a female passenger exited the car and knocked the officer to the ground in an attempt to take back the license. She tore off the officer's pants while he attempted to put the license into his pocket.

The driver and her passenger were arrested when more officers arrived to help.

(Tencent News)

Drunk Man Beats Up Wife's Didi Driver

Reeking of firewater and burning with fury, a man surnamed Dong in Jiangsu province barreled out of his apartment and began smashing the vehicle of the man who kept arriving every morning to pick up his wife.

Unconvinced by Liu's pleas that he was merely a hired driver, Dong began punching the man through the window in his face and neck and attempted to drag his wife and child away from the car.

Dong apparently never heard of Didi ShunfengChe, a new ride sharing service launched in June that matches drivers who want to share the cost of their work commute with nearby passengers. The debacle cost him 700 yuan: 300 yuan for Liu's medical care and a one-time compensation payment of 500 yuan.

(The Paper)

Super Grannies Shove Cars Out of Dancing Space

The dancing grannies of Xi'an, Shaanxi province showed what superpowers a century of diligent tai-chi practice can yield.

When several private cars parked in a way that obstructed their dancing path, the women teamed up to thrust them out of the way.

Witnesses said the dama crew carried away a car, a large van and an SUV before they deemed the square fit for dancing.

(Tencent News)

Speedy Ostrich Moonlights as Road Runner

An ostrich escaped from its pen and began tearing down the streets of Nanjing, Guangxi province. The owner of the 2-meter bird said he was afraid it might be spooked by bystanders and called in a special team to retrieve it.

The team spent two days chasing the ostrich before getting close enough to tase it into submission.

(Tencent News)

Angry Taoist Attacks Chen Kaige's Film

BY SHU PENGQIAN

Director Chen Kaige's *Monk Comes Down the Mountain* has been playing in cinemas for almost a month, but the media's focus has been less on the blockbuster's quality than on its online detractors.

Meng Chongran, director of the Rights and Interests Protection Committee of the China Taoist Association, released a statement over WeChat on July 19 that condemned Chen's creation for "smearing the image of Taoism."

Meng took particular issue with the film's hero, He An (actor Wang Baoqiang), who breaks the laws of Taoism by killing people and confessing his sins to Buddha.

"[This film] has impaired the harmony between Buddhism and Taoism and it is manufacturing religious conflicts on purpose," she wrote.

Meng said the film was a bad influence on society, demanded that it be pulled from cinemas and called on Chen to issue a public apology.

Unsurprisingly, her demands have met with little support.

"Based on Meng Chongran's logic, Chi-

nese artists have a lot to apologize for," a netizen using the pseudonym Wulei Qingcheng wrote.

"Wu Cheng'en, the author of *Journey to the West*, should apologize to the China Buddhism Association."

Leveler heads noted that film is the product of artistic creation. Limiting China's creators to ancient religious frameworks would force the art circle to go in circles.

Even other Taoists have stepped up to defend *Monk Come Down the Mountain* from Meng's allegations.

"It's not a big deal that a Taoist kneels before Buddha if it represents what is just. A Taoist can kneel to an ordinary man if he stands on the side of truth," said Liang Xinyang, secretary-general of Chang'an Taoist Association.

Liang praised the film as a window to help more people learn about the religion – even it was not entirely accurate in its presentation.

A spokesman for the China Taoist Association said the film's producer met with them to exchange ideas and revised



Photo by v.qq.com

the plot according to their suggestions.

"We know and understand this is an artistic creation," Liang said.

Chen Kaige has not issued a reply to Meng's open letter. ■



Photo by Chen Wei/CFP

divorce after its birth. Unwilling to live a lie and eager to champion the debate, the two started an online project to raise 40,000 yuan toward the fine.

"An independent woman in this era should have the right to choose whether to have a child outside of marriage. How is it sensible to forcibly tie the right to give birth to marriage?" Wu wrote.

Their decision remains hotly contested, with many online condemning their project as a crude attempt to make society pay for their mistake. But Wu and Shen told *Vice China* that their increasing frustrating interactions with the local Family Planning Office convinced them to make their story heard.

"We are prepared to have people disagree with us, but we hope our project can trigger some sensible discussion online," Wu told *Vice China*.

Less educated mothers have been unable to find an audience for their woes.

In 2013, China Smack reported that one single mom named Liu Fei (pseudonym) sued the Beijing Fangshan District Public Security Sub-Bureau for refusing to process her child's hukou. Liu gave birth to Jie (pseudonym) while outside a marriage and was unable to pay the staggeringly high social maintenance fees. At the time of the lawsuit, Jie was an 8-year-old heihu.

"From the child's birth certificate to the education, every step of the way, Liu Fei has repeatedly suffered obstacles and setbacks and been forced to 'find connections and beg favors' everywhere. Even so, the line for Jie's identification number on his school enrollment card is blank," China Smack wrote.

Liu's case is not unusual. Huang Yezhi, a lawyer specializing in hukou cases, told *Vocativ* in 2013 that government statistics say 13 million people in China are without hukou. Most are children.

"In the countryside, the situation is much worse. In the city you have media and monitors. No one reports on what is happening in the countryside," Huang said.

Moms Face Discrimination

China's Marriage Law clearly states that children enjoy equal rights whether they are born in or out of wedlock. But as is so often the case, the law is completely disconnected from practice.

In addition to paying illegal "social maintenance fees" to get their child registered, most unwed mothers are prohibited from being treated by hospitals on account of their missing Birth Permission Certificate. In the rare case where a hospital agrees to admit an unmarried mother, her insurance will not cover her expenses.

A marital lawyer in Beijing told *Vice China* that the "equal rights" mentioned in China's Marriage Law only ensure children born out of wedlock enjoy the same rights as their siblings who are born within a legal marriage.

It is not only heihu children who are left to suffer. Their parents, especially mothers, face great social pressure from colleagues, family and friends who are unwilling or unable to understand or help.

A spokesperson for the China's Women Association surnamed Yang told VOA News in 2013 very few unmarried moms have ever asked the organization for help.

"We don't provide aid to unmarried mothers. There is no need for it," Yang said. ■

Hukou Woes Snare Independent Moms

BY WANG YAN

Wu Xia and Shen Bolun had their first child on June 21. But the joy of having a new baby was quickly tempered by a 40,000 yuan fine – their punishment for carrying a child to term out of wedlock.

The two began dating in November 2013 and Wu became pregnant a year later. This January, the two broke up amid questions over what to do about the baby. But the ultimate question was not one of the child's life but of its hukou.

Ultimate Problem

Hukou is a system of household registration used on the Chinese mainland. All social services including health care, housing, employment and free public education are tied to the hukou system and confined to one's registered area. In most cases, children inherit their parents' hukou and are registered where they are born.

In spite of how many positive services it carries, the hukou system has been widely condemned as a way to split the country into urban and rural castes. Even for people born in urban areas, hukou can be a lifelong headache



Photo by FDC.com

that hinders school enrollment, mobility and international travel.

Assuming one has a hukou, such bureaucratic problems are usually solved by frequent visits to government offices and a stack of application forms. But children who fail to acquire a hukou at birth face lifelong discrimination by the system.

A Chinese citizen without a hukou is essentially a non-person: they are unable to enroll in school, travel outside their county, get a job or engage in the social system. Many are even denied a birth certificate.

Systematic Hole

There are a variety of ways in which a

child can fail to acquire hukou, but the lack of a Birth Permission Certificate is the most common.

According to the country's Family Planning Policy, a woman cannot legally register her child's birth without a document that proves she is legally married and otherwise childless. Children born without this certificate – or heihu – are unable to obtain any form of government identification.

Administrative barriers haunt these children through every step of their lives. No public school will admit a heihu, and many hospitals refuse to treat undocumented children. As adults, most are unable to be employed in stable jobs and all are denied access to social insurance accounts.

Wu and Shen consulted their local Family Planning Office to inquire about having a baby outside a marriage. They were told they would need to pay a 43,910 yuan "social maintenance fee," and to submit a paternity test and have its results signed by the head of the local police bureau.

Given the challenge, the office advised them to register a fake marriage to get the baby a hukou and

10 Years Later, China Still Short on Professional Networks

BY WANG LINGXIAO

LinkedIn China began promoting its independent professional networking app "Chitu" in late June. The popular professional networking company seeks to position Chitu as an app "more in tune with Chinese needs."

Unlike many competing products, the development and direction of Chitu is managed entirely by LinkedIn's China team, said Shen Boyang, CEO of LinkedIn China.

But Chitu's mere existence is evidence of the company's struggles.

LinkedIn has not been the breakout success that many hoped for when the company entered China last year. The app has become yet another name in China's long line of failed professional networking sites such as Wealink, DingTalk, Momo and Tianji.

Momo in particular experimented with novel ways to retain users, such as providing dedicated channels for coworkers to gossip or complain about their bosses. But judging by the company's ongoing slide, it has never found what Chinese users want.

"Weak Relations"

For most Chinese users, professional networking sites are only a tool for finding work or sourcing talent. But on these two points, most fall short of meeting their expectations. Swarms of advertisements and junky leads quickly overwhelm users' accounts.

Sites like LinkedIn appear to be playing two different games, positioning themselves as both business and communication platforms. But no number of social networking features can hide the

fact that most users visit LinkedIn to find jobs.

Reid Garret Hoffman, the founder of LinkedIn, said in his book *The Start-up of You* that professional networking depends on weak relations.

But weak relations are not how Chinese business works.

Cultural Differences

Most professional networking sites follow the LinkedIn model, which uses an inherently Eurocentric approach to understanding users. For whatever reason, Western users seem to be more willing to share their experiences and moods without any utilitarian purpose.

In China, social networking is decidedly utilitarianism.

The recommendations of friends and opinions of one's parents exert a heavy influence on one's career development. What's more, Chinese social communication heavily emphasizes drinking and eating in person.

In China, it's face-to-face communication between acquaintances that lays the groundwork for business.

"Americans may seek out people who would be helpful on LinkedIn and talk about business directly. In China, it's friends first, business second," said Lin Feng, the founder of Tianji. "No matter how perfectly I imitated LinkedIn on Tianji, recruiters were the only people who were ever looking at profiles."

Furthermore, Americans and Europeans tend to have a stronger work-life distinction. In China, these spheres blend until it's hard to say whether a meal was a friendly meet-up or a business lunch. It's hard to convince users to split their lives across

different platforms.

It's unsurprising that many companies treat Weibo and WeChat, with their more than 550 million active users, as the primary tools for communication and discovery.

No Valuable Users

Whether in China or abroad, the most active users of professional networking sites are freelancers, start-ups, small businesses and recruiters. While there are many CEO accounts, few come from notable firms or offer anything in the way of valuable contacts.

Most traditional industries in China don't explore new apps, and senior managers rarely have any technological competence. Many view the Internet with suspicion and avoid it like an unnecessary trouble or danger.

Ordinary workers, while more adept, have a limited need for networking relationships. In China, second-degree – or even third and fourth-degree contacts – offer very little aid in career development.

But senior managers and executives are the backbone of professional networking sites. Without them, directors, managers and workers and graduates have little incentive to sign up. The dearth of good users leaves many sites unable to generate useful content.

Chitu faces a difficult decision. If it appeals to the social networking habits of China's young adults, it will never attract the high-level users it requires to avoid abandonment. Whether its team can learn from 10 years of failure to find a formula that works for China remains to be seen. ■

(Wang Lingxiao is an intern at Beijing Today.)

Linked in



Photo by CFP



Photo by CFP

'Mysterious' Party Schools Surprisingly Open

BY YANG XIN

China's Central Communist Party schools have long been labeled as "mysterious." For many foreigners, the party's schools – especially the Central Party School in Beijing – seem endowed with some arcane power.

A team of Stanford University scientists says they have managed to shed some light on these schools' operations – in a good way.

Political scientist Charlotte Lee, associate director of the China Program at Stanford's Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, released the team's findings on July 16. Lee said Chinese Communist Party schools have adapted to entrepreneurial and market lessons in a way that reflects political change.

"Once viewed as inflexible, China's party-managed training academies, or 'party schools,' are using many of the strategies found in China's hybrid, state-run private sector," Lee said.

For those who know a bit about China's political regime, the university's report has been doubly surprising.

Party School System

China's network of party schools are separated into the national level, which are composed of six major training institutions, the provincial level, the vice-provincial level and the county level.

Their complex hierarchy was the subject of a paper by Guo Weigui, a visiting scholar at the East Asian Institute of the National University of Singapore, and his colleague Shan Wei.

But the structure of party school training is not centralized, Guo wrote. Local

party schools are under the supervision of local party committees not the central party school. Upper-level party schools usually have little say over the internal issues of lower-level schools.

"The primary task of China's Party schools is to train cadres at provincial and ministerial level. The party school system is also supposed to be an important think-tank for the Chinese Communist Party and the government in their policy-making, as well as their research institutes in philosophy and social sciences," Guo wrote.

The Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in western Beijing, also known as the Central Party School, is China's top party school and the training ground for high-ranking officials.

Established in 1933 in Ruijin, Jiangxi province, the school indoctrinates cadres in Marxism, Leninism and Maoism. The school was suspended in 1966 as part of the Cultural Revolution, but it resumed in 1977.

Almost all cadres above the provincial level are sent to receive training at the school for terms ranging from two months to one year. A report by *China Daily* in 2011 said that young and middle-aged officials spend six months to a year at the school, usually followed by a promotion.

"Often, top leaders choose the school as a forum for introducing new policy concepts, which then trickle down through the state bureaucracy and media. The Central Party School sits at the top of a vast network of party schools around the country, which train lower-level officials. Although the school devotes considerable energy to manufacturing palatable concepts, it's not just a propaganda factory,"

Foreign Policy wrote.

Freedom & Transparency

In spite of stereotypes, the Central Party School may be one of the freest places in China.

Melissa Chan, a journalist at Al Jazeera, said she visited the Central Party School and heard a surprisingly free-wheeling discussion.

"We have to talk about and analyze sensitive issues," said Liu Changlong, a professor at the Central Party School. "The academic and teaching environment here is very relaxed. There are no limitations to what can and cannot be discussed."

"The Party School is an open forum because it has to be. On the closed campus of the Party School, officials must consider the real issues of income inequality, protests and what direction the country should be headed, both politically and economically," Liu said.

Class participants are expected to leave their self-censorship habits at the door, *China Daily* reported.

"Teachers told us there are no taboos in their teaching, and officials can debate almost any sensitive issue," said Li Tao, a postgraduate student at the school.

"The Central Party School is where officials and researchers debate the future of the country and the party. They have to face the problems and find ways to solve them. Speaking empty words or flattery makes no sense," said Wu Zhongmin, a professor of social justice at the school.

Sign of Change

Charlotte Lee said the party has embraced new ideas and opened up to the world in

recent decades.

Stanford News said China's party schools are using the case method approach pioneered by Harvard Business School as one of their core teaching methods, which Lee described as a "force of inspiration" for students.

In addition to Marxist literature and party dogma, classes also explore Western political theory, economics and frontier issues of contemporary law, religion, military affairs, science and technology.

The curriculum revision reflects the changes that have occurred in Chinese society, said Xie Chuntao, vice director of a research group on party history. Mid-level and high-ranking party cadres who make up the student body are also given lessons in opera appreciation and diplomatic etiquette.

Lee said the schools, once almost shrouded in secrecy, are now renting out their office parks to other organizations as a way to raise revenue.

"They are opening up in more than one way," Lee said, adding that the overall process began in the 1980s and accelerated in 2005 when China established state-of-the-art executive leadership academies that required a more legitimate educational approach.

Jin Wei came to work at the Central Party School in 1985. At that time, the school was classified as a confidential unit and could neither be found on a map nor through an information directory desk.

At the end of the 1990s, the Central Party School entered into cooperation with foreign research institutes and universities. Overseas study tours have become an important part of its curriculum.

The school also began to invite foreign scholars to deliver lectures. In June 2005, Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS and under secretary-general of the UN, spoke about AIDS prevention at the school. ■



Photo by the Polish Embassy in Beijing

Polish Drama Lands on Beijing's Stage

BY YANG XIN

Polish drama is coming to Chinese stages during Polish Theatre Month, an event that brings the energy and rhythm of Poland's contemporary theater to Beijing's stage.

Supported by the Polish Embassy's Cultural Department, the event begins with "Forefathers' Eve," a poetic drama by Adam Mickiewicz. The play is hailed as "the Polish national drama" and its four parts explore spirituality, patriotism and love.

In spite of its impact on Polish culture and national identity, Mickiewicz's masterpiece has never been staged unabridged. Director Michal Zadara is the first one to bring it to the international stage. His adaptation is characterized by a fresh and occasionally humorous



approach to the venerated classic. "Forefathers' Eve" will be staged through August 2 at the Beijing People's Art Theatre. Two drama projects are



Photo by the Polish Theatre in Wroclaw

also being introduced during the Polish Theatre Month: television theatre and drama script reading.

Television theatre is a Polish stage art that combines television and drama, and two of its representative works – "Valentina" and "Suitcase" – are coming to Beijing in August.

Director Krzysztof Warlikowski's acclaimed production "Apolonia," which calls upon excerpts from Greek tragedies and Polish novels, provides the title for the anthology as it encapsulates the key subjects, conflicts and dilemmas prominent in theater.

The drama delves into complex topics such as Poland's loss after the Holocaust, its difficult postwar relations with Germany, the social metamorphoses since the political upheaval of 1989 and the needs of Polish families and youth since the nation's transition

to free-market economy.

"Apolonia" will be read by young, local performers in Chinese.

A Polish Folk Design exhibition at the National Art Museum of China follows the performances and will remain open through mid-September. "From Source to Inspiration – Nationality in Polish Design" displays 85 Polish clothing arts and design works to promote Chinese interest in Polish culture.

Other culture-related events include Polish participation at the Beijing International Book Fair.

"The year 2015 has a significant meaning in the Polish drama community. It marks the 250th anniversary of the establishment of Polish Public Theatre and the 100th anniversary of the birth of renowned Polish theatre master Tadeusz Kantor. We Polish people are proud of what they have contributed to Polish drama and stage arts worldwide," said Magdalena Czechowska, director of Polish Embassy Cultural Department.

"Polish drama has a profound history and has been exerting a significant influence on European culture. We hope to present diverse Polish drama arts to Chinese audiences so they can learn about the vanguard of Polish drama and its contributions to the European drama world," she said. ■

Embassy Lecture Introduces NCPA's New Italian Opera

BY YANG XIN

The opera that cemented composer Giuseppe Verdi's position as one of Italy's leading operatic maestros, "Simon Boccanegra," is coming to Beijing with a lecture by Giuseppe Cuccia, consultant to the National Center for Performing Arts.

As a young man, Simon Boccanegra suffers appalling misfortune. His lover Maria dies and their baby daughter disappears. Many years later, Boccanegra, now Doge of Genoa, is reunited with his daughter. But their happiness is threatened by Boccanegra's enemies, including the man who helped him win power.

What is the personal price of political success? The question lies at the heart of "Simon Boccanegra." The opera is a sympathetic portrait of a man whose past catches up with him.

Verdi aimed for a plain, almost austere style in "Simon Boccanegra,"

reflecting the harsh political world of Renaissance Genoa.

The opera premiered in 1857 in Venice. It was not a success, given the complications of the original plot. Verdi's publisher Ricordi suggested that the composer make some revisions, but Verdi was non-committal.

Finally, 23 years later, Ricordi introduced Verdi to Arrigo Boito, who was keen to work with the composer as a librettist.

The revised opera's premiere in Milan met with great acclaim. Although it took "Boccanegra" time to become established in the repertory, it has steadily grown in popularity, particularly in recent years. "Simon Boccanegra" is now recognized as one of Verdi's most compelling works. In 2011 there were three new productions in Europe plus several revivals. It is this version that is the frequently performed today.



Photo by NCPA

The Italian Embassy makes its compound available for presentations and lectures on Italian drama, opera and other cultural performances. Giuseppe Cuccia visits the embassy before each performance to share information about the opera Italian stage art.

Before joining the NCPA in 2011, Cuccia once was the art director of several famous opera houses such as the Catania Bellini Opera House, the La Maestranza Opera House in Sevilla and Teatro Mas-

simo of Palermo.

"Simon Boccanegra" will be performed at the NCPA from August 20 to 23. The Chinese performance will feature Chinese musicians He Hui, Tian Haojiang and Zhou Xiaolin. ■

Italian Embassy Cultural Center

⌚ 6 pm, August 3

📍 2 Sanlitun Dong ErJie, Chaoyang

💎 Free



BesT Club Membership Opening

BesT Club is recruiting new members!
Founded by Beijing Today Media Center in May 2003, BesT Club is a bridge that connects China with foreign countries and offers a rare opportunity for members to join in international events.

Membership Benefits

A Round-the-World Tour

BesT Club receives the latest information from each embassy and international cultural institution operating in China.

Members can join any cultural, art or social activity held by participating organizations free of any charge.

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Get free information and tickets to performances by indie musicians and theater companies for participating BesT Club events.

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Club members can enjoy a discount on print subscriptions to *Beijing Today*, now just 70 yuan per year.

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BesT Club opens the *Beijing Today* office to interested visitors each year.

During the open house, mem-

bers can visit the paper, learn about how it was produced, and see how its print edition and video content comes together.

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(By Shu Pengqian)

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